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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 004907

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/ERA, EUR/RPM, EUR/WE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/28/2013

TAGS: [PREL](#) [IT](#) [ESDP](#) [EUN](#) [NATO](#)

SUBJECT: STRUCTURED COOPERATION: NEW VARIATIONS FROM
ITALY'S EU PRESIDENCY

Classified By: AMBASSADOR SEMBLER. REASON: 1.5 (B)(D)

Guidance request. See para 7.

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. Senate President Pera told Ambassador Sembler on October 28 that Italy is discussing with other EU partners a new concept on structured cooperation which would have the IGC at 25 endorse structured cooperation as a concept. It would also delegate to the major European military powers the authority to plan and/or carry out military operations. The Ambassador emphasized that such a structure would be inconsistent with Berlin plus. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) On October 28, Ambassador Sembler, accompanied by DCM and POL Minister-Counselor, hosted a lunch for Senate President Marcello Pera and two advisors. Pera had requested the meeting to talk about the EU's deliberations in the Intergovernmental Conference on structured cooperation for European defense and security. Pera relayed a variation on this concept that we had not heard before. He said that he had been appraised of this new formula by Foreign Minister Frattini who had called him the previous evening to summarize ongoing talks among Italy, UK, France and Germany.

[1](#)3. (C) The proposal as Frattini explained it to Pera would have the IGC at 25 endorse structured cooperation as a mechanism. It would also delegate to the major European military powers - UK, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, probably Poland and perhaps the Netherlands - the authority to plan and carry out military operations. This would not necessarily be achieved by naming specific countries, but rather be done indirectly by conferring membership in the core group on countries that had a certain number of men under arms, level of capabilities, or some other objective measure that only certain nations could meet. (This is the first time Embassy has heard that use of force could be authorized by anything other than consensus at 25.) Pera and his advisors were uncertain if the smaller group would require consensus among its members or a qualified majority vote (QMV) within the group for a decision.

[1](#)4. (C) Pera was curious as to what changed UK Prime Minister Blair's pledge to stand firm against structured cooperation. It would be very difficult, Pera emphasized, for Italy to stand up and oppose any proposal that the UK had agreed with Germany and France. Pera noted the pressure Italy is under -- domestically and within the EU -- to craft an acceptable outcome in the IGC before the end of the year. He said that giving a prominent role to Spain and Poland may be a means to get them to relent on their hard stance on voting weights. Pera wondered if the UK shifting its position on structured cooperation should be taken as an indication that Washington was comfortable with the concept of structured cooperation in general and the variation described by Frattini.

[1](#)5. (C) The Ambassador, DCM and POL Minister Counselor explained to Pera that the USG has deep reservations about structured cooperation, which could undercut Berlin-plus. The US is frustrated that many EU members are devoting more energy into finding ways to bypass Berlin-plus than to strengthening it. The ideas seen thus far, including this one, are duplicative of, and potentially competitive with NATO. The Ambassador emphasized that the formal response to structured cooperation is still under discussion in Washington, but reiterated that if the EU insists on including a reference to structured cooperation in the constitution, then it should:

- not include a mutual defense clause;
- not propose separate EU planning HQ (Tervuren);
- preserve the principle of EU-wide consensus on decisions to use military force;
- be open to non-EU NATO members and non-NATO EU members;
- generally reaffirm Berlin plus.

[1](#)6. (C) Emboffs said that the latest version as described by Frattini did not seem to reflect an improvement from the US

standpoint. If the EU permanently delegated operations decisions to a subgroup that could make decisions by less than unanimity, it might be worse than other variations. That would be inconsistent with Berlin plus and ignore the above points, which we have been emphasizing throughout EU

capitals and in Brussels for months.

17. (C) Comment and guidance request: Pera is not in the Executive Branch, but he's a key leader of the coalition and a trusted friend of the US. He was not merely floating Frattini's ideas to register our reaction. He genuinely wants the EU to make the right decisions on ESDP vis a vis NATO. He will relay the Embassy reaction to the latest proposal to Frattini and PM Berlusconi. Post would appreciate more definitive guidance from Washington to make clear directly to the PM and FM our stand on structured cooperation, as well as US reaction should the EU go down the path Frattini described to Pera. Embassy Rome would also be interested in hearing whether other posts have heard similar descriptions of the state of play on structured cooperation in the IGC from their interlocutors.

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2003ROME04907 - Classification: CONFIDENTIAL